

Attachment 4.2(c) Summary of Input and Recommendations of the State Rehabilitation Council; Response of Designated State Unit; and Explanation of Input or Recommendations

This attachment addresses input and recommendations provided by the Washington State Rehabilitation Council to the Washington State Division of Vocational Rehabilitation from October 1, 2007 through September 30, 2008.

In 2007 the WSRC concluded its latest customer satisfaction surveying effort by presenting seven recommendations to DVR's Senior Leadership Team. In October 2007 and January 2008 we followed up by requesting that DVR explain any action taken on four of the seven recommendations by presenting at our quarterly meetings. The four recommendations were:

1. Insure that VR services recommended by counselors or vendors are aligned to support the customer in attaining his or her job objective;

DVR actions:

- a. DVR redesigned the Vocational Assessment and Individualized Plan for Employment screens in its electronic case management system. These changes include fields for describing the results of a vocational assessment, barriers to employment, and how VR services will be used to address the barriers. Staff were trained on both the technological changes and the rehabilitation aspects of these documentation features.
 - b. Workstrides, a series of vocational exploration and planning workshops for customers, has been expanded to more offices. This workshop equips customers to better understand their barriers and VR needs, and to enter the plan development phase with the information needed to work effectively with their counselors to select the right services to achieve their goal.
 - c. Contract services for trial work assessment and community based assessment were better defined to ensure that each service is distinguished and used for the proper purpose. Training was provided to counseling staff.
 - d. VR Supervisors conduct case reviews of two cases per counselor per month and use the results for monitoring case quality and for coaching staff. The case review tool includes this issue.
 - e. A statewide case review was conducted that includes this issue. Results did not indicate this was a significant issue.
2. Encourage counselors to communicate how specific services support the attainment of the job objective;

DVR actions:

- a. Changes in STARS (see 1a above) and related training reinforced with counselors the need to align the VR services provided with the barriers to employment identified through the eligibility and vocational assessment phases.
 - b. The expansion of Workstrides provides more customers with greater understanding of the VR process and preparation to engage in it effectively.
 - c. DVR produced a DVD for customers explaining the VR process. DVR also updated its core informational brochures and redesigned its web site for improved access to information.
 - d. Counseling staff are receiving training in motivational interviewing, a counseling technique that is grounded in providing information to customers to enable them to make effective choices about VR services.
3. Strengthen the existing practice of advising customers about the role of the Client Assistance Program by consistently reminding customers of their rights when conflicts or bottlenecks emerge and;

DVR actions:

- a. DVR units have CAP representatives attend staff meetings to encourage open communication and strong relationships.
 - b. A CAP representative is on the Rehabilitation Law training team, and covers client assistance program and DVR's role in advising customers of its services.
 - c. DVR brochures, DVDs, letters and other communications to customers include information about CAP.
 - d. CAP staff is appointed as a member of the Field Services Senior Rehabilitation Team.
 - e. CAP staff participates in Statewide Management Team meetings.
4. Develop a proactive (prerelease) waitlist management strategy that supports the Division and its customers to be in a better position to succeed.

DVR actions:

- a. DVR initiated a quarterly newsletter to individuals on the waiting list with updated information and employment resources.
- b. DVR assigned an individual to contact people on the waiting list to determine if they were still interested in waiting for DVR services, closing cases for those who indicated they were not interested and updating contact information as needed.
- c. DVR adopted a schedule to serve everyone on the waiting list.
- d. DVR released the final names on the waiting list in February 2008 and has been operating without a waiting list since that time.

On November 30, 2007, the WSRC presented a document entitled, "The Washington State Rehabilitation Council's Analysis of Issues Presented in the Fiscal Year 2007 Monitoring Report on the Vocational Rehabilitation and Independent Living Programs in Washington" to Lynnae Rutledge, Director of the Washington State Division of

Vocational Rehabilitation. Within the document the Council made the following nine recommendations:

1. Support staff to increase their ability to achieve successful employment outcomes for transition aged individuals;

DVR actions:

- a. DVR negotiated a new inter-agency agreement with the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction.
 - b. DVR counseling staff began a series of training in motivational interviewing, a counseling technique designed to help customers make decisions about their vocational rehabilitation that lead to success.
 - c. DVR produced a DVD for high school transition.
 - d. DVR updated its list of high school liaisons.
 - e. DVR established new position, Community Relations Statewide Program Administrator that has a part of its role, a focus on transition services.
 - f. The WSRC and DVR established a committee that is entrusted with reviewing the current process for transition customers within the DVR system and to identify strategies that will improve the process.
 - g. Beginning in October 2008, the DVR-CIL Title VII, Part B contracts established a focus on creating new IL services for transition youth, especially 504 plan youth.
2. Make the earnings for individuals served at closure a high priority by encouraging the establishment of measurable milestones that challenge counselors and customers to expect higher wages;

DVR actions:

DVR began researching wages of its customers and comparing outcomes with those of other workforce programs, other states, and the general population, as well as unique factors that impact wages, such as rate of cases with SSI/SSDI, DD and high school transition. DVR has also been involved, in collaboration with DDD, in funding technical assistance and training from WISE and O'Neill and Associates to build capacity for CRPs with the goal of increasing wages and hours for individuals served in supported employment.

3. Educate DVR staff about the importance of placing people with disabilities into good jobs with good pay and benefits on a full-time basis whenever it is consistent with the customers' ability and choice;

DVR actions:

- a. DVR issued an invitation to community organizations to consider establishing Project SEARCH sites with DVR start-up funding. This resulted in several new Project SEARCH sites being identified and developed. This project promotes

- jobs in health care settings where individuals earn competitive wages and benefits.
- b. DVR had a recruitment under way for a position to promote employment in State Government; however, due to the hiring freeze affecting state positions, DVR was unable to fill the position or pursue the program.
 - c. DVR initiated a customer internship program for individuals who are job ready but who lack experience needed to enter their chosen field. Customers are placed with employers to complete a paid internship for 3-6 months.
4. Increase the numbers of DVR customers per caseload to 75.

DVR actions:

In 2008 as DVR ended the waiting list, caseloads grew considerably. Most caseloads well exceeded 75 cases, and many exceeded 100.

5. Support counselors in developing the capacity to increase the number of Individualized Plans for Employment they complete each year;

DVR actions:

In 2008, DVR developed 65% more IPEs than in 2007. Once DVR moved through the waiting list and was able to serve current customers, IPE development improved dramatically.

6. Identify specific strategies for increasing the number of applicants for services and ensuring that eligibility and individualized planning is timely and comprehensive;

DVR actions:

- a. DVR established a statewide target for new applications.
 - b. Each DVR office was provided a caseload forecast to compare current application rate with the application rate needed to achieve caseload capacity.
 - c. Local offices established outreach efforts to increase applications among underserved groups.
 - d. DVR reestablished communication with partners that had gone underserved under order of selection. DVR updated agreements with Division of Alcohol and Substance Abuse and Workfirst (TANF and GAU programs).
 - e. DVR also updated agreements with the Department of Services for the Blind and tribal VR programs.
 - f. DVR has increased its presence at WorkSource (one-stop) Centers.
7. Be more specific about how DVR will contribute to the development of the capacity of CRP's to ensure that individuals with disabilities receive the highest quality services;

DVR actions:

- a. DVR conducted a series of meeting with CRP representatives to identify issues related to the DVR contract that got in the way of achieving outcomes. As a result, contracts were amended to integrate improvements.
 - b. When contracts were revised, DVR staff and CRP staff attended joint training.
 - c. DVR requested TA from RSA in identifying best practices among VR agencies for purchasing CRP services.
 - d. DVR will begin evaluating contract outcomes in 2009 and plans to integrate quality outcome measures and expectations in its subsequent CRP contract.
8. Identify demographic trends in the state and actively recruit field staff and management with skills and experience working in those communities and;

DVR actions:

- a. DVR researched and reported to the SRC on its staff composition in terms of diversity representation throughout the state.
 - b. DVR targets diversity recruitments, including people with disabilities and bilingual staff in target areas.
 - c. DVR has used in-training positions to hire individuals from local communities who do not meet the current qualifications at the time of hire.
9. Document improvements in the number of individuals with disabilities who go to work in good paying jobs with good benefits.

DVR actions:

DVR began researching wages of its customers and comparing outcomes with those of other workforce programs, other states, and the general population, as well as unique factors that impact wages, such as rate of cases with SSI/SSDI, DD and high school transition.

At the April quarterly meeting of the Council inquired about DVR's strategies for managing the VR process in the post Order of Selection environment based on concern about the impacts of rapid caseload growth on the quality and timeliness of service delivery.

In addition, while it wasn't a WSRC recommendation, DVR has continued to take action with regard to the concerns related to timely case movement. DVR has developed and utilizes internal management reports to monitor and impact case movement. Staff have been prompted to maintain updated case narratives regarding customer communication and progress through the vocational rehabilitation process. IT staff have assisted with including a mechanism for flagging overdue cases and denoting which cases reflected high school transition customers.

DVR and the WSRC continue to build on a positive and constructive working relationship. Input and recommendations from the WSRC, as a policy partner, are greatly valued by DVR and continue to be vital in assisting the agency to better provide services that meet the needs of our customers.

This concludes the summary of input and recommendations of the State Rehabilitation Council.

DRAFT